



**PINPOINT**



*One of the central aims of unseen observations is to encourage the teacher to engage in a process of reflection and analysis of their theories.*

Matt O'Leary

**Definition**

As unlikely as it seems, unseen observations are exactly as described. There is no observer entering the classroom. There is no disturbance to the dynamics so the students and the teacher are not adversely affected. All the work happens in the pre and post-lesson conversations.



*It is the teacher's perception of the taught lesson that provides the basis for the supervisor's work in their interaction with the teacher.*

Matt O'Leary

**Origins**

The world of therapy introduced this practice as observers directly affect the session. One early educational adoption of this approach was in a language school that was the subject of a study by Matt O'Leary and reported on in his book on Classroom Observations.



*Through the process of explaining these theories to others who hold different views, what is known is made more explicit.*

Lorna Earl & Helen Timperley

**Purpose**

The purpose of this innovative approach to observations is to eliminate *jumping through hoops* and create deep learning. This takes place through the detailed conversation about the teacher's planning and analysis of its effectiveness.



*The stimulus for the professional dialogue between observer and observee is based on the latter's self-analysis and recounting of the lesson itself.*

Matt O'Leary

**Benefits**

In Matt O'Leary's study, he found that teachers responded very favourably to this approach. They were highly professional in seeking to learn within this more trusting atmosphere.

One teacher reported that "It just pushes you to think things through. And also to have somebody to ask about things is really good because you weren't simply passive".

This echoes Danielson who rates teachers talking in this way over managers' feedback.

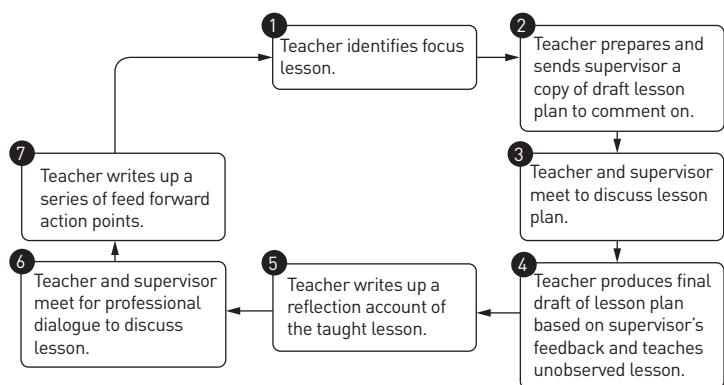


*Conversations about practice constitute a critical vehicle for professional learning.*

Charlotte Danielson

**Process**

This is the 7-step process Matt O'Leary captured in his research on this approach to professional learning through observations.



O'Leary, M. (2014) Classroom Observation, Routledge, London

**Questions for Learning**

Asking the right questions, with the right tone, ensures the conversation is an exploration and not a test. Charlotte Danielson suggests these tips:

**Plural forms:** Asking for "some possible explanations" avoids the idea of there being only one correct answer.

**Promote analysis:** Ask questions that require comparisons between one situation and another.

**Invite speculation:** Structure questions around the Would/If format to prompt hypothetical thinking.

**Encourage metacognition:** Ask questions about the teacher's thinking not just the events being described.

**Adding HOW2s**

HOW2s add much to this process. The precise visual step-by-step guides encourage teachers to be specific about the techniques they are discussing. Above all, it ensures there is a shared understanding as a basis for the conversation.

Student learning statements — attached to each HOW2 — additionally focus minds on the intended learning outcomes.

And the internal feedback loop within the HOW2 Process, builds in the very notion of reviewing and refining one's teaching. This helps teachers become action-researchers in their day-to-day teaching. Safety and rigour are nicely balanced in unseen observations.

**REFERENCES**

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